



# River Connection

Winter 2018

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## Make A Splash in the MNRR!

Year 2018 is rich with anniversary recognition:

- The 50th anniversary of the Wild and Scenic Rivers and National Trails System Acts
- The 40th birthday for both the Missouri National Recreational River (MNRR) and the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail!

National Park Service staff and the Friends of the MNRR will encourage visitors to explore the river and trails of the MNRR.

More than 30 rivers in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System are part of the National Park Service. St. Croix National Scenic Riverway that borders Wisconsin and Minnesota, Niobrara National Scenic River in Nebraska, the MNRR, — truly all of the System's 208 rivers offer opportunities for fun, as well as inspiration, solace, and renewal. We're hoping you'll make 2018 the year to pick up a paddle and #MakeYourSplash—you can use that hashtag on Twitter, Instagram, or Facebook.

The legislative acts creating these national systems of protected rivers and trails were signed in 1968; they continue to be a part of a substantial effort bringing public lands to the forefront of American consciousness. Our nation's Wild and Scenic Rivers include rivers flowing through primitive, unspoiled landscapes to some that meander across rural landscapes, small towns, and near big cities.

Free-flowing rivers create natural riparian areas that foster healthy, abundant, and diverse wildlife populations. They serve as centerpieces of rich ecological processes, and as recreational destinations like the MNRR. Through the arterial connections of rivers to communities, we all live downstream of a Wild and Scenic River. Let's make 2018 a year to share them with as many like-minded enthusiasts as we can!



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## OUR MISSION

The mission of the Friends of the Missouri National Recreational River is to build awareness, enhance and advocate for the scenic, recreational, fish and wildlife, ecological, geological, cultural/historical values and economic and recreational opportunities of the Missouri River, a component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

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## COMMENTS? Write to:

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Yankton, SD 57078

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605-665-0209 (Park Office)

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## Chair's Corner

Paul Lepisto

This is a good time to reflect back and also to look forward at what the New Year holds. In 2017 the Friends of the Missouri National Recreational River (MNRR) had much to be proud of as we helped with many events and activities that directly align with our mission:

*The mission of the Friends of The Missouri National Recreational River is to build awareness, enhance and advocate for the scenic, recreational, fish and wildlife, ecological, geological, cultural/historical values and economic opportunities of the Missouri River, a recreational component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.*

Through hard work and dedication many Friend members raised public awareness of the MNRR and the outstanding and varied opportunities it provides to residents and visitors. Friend members shared their knowledge and heartfelt passion for the MNRR at multiple events.

Friend members provided assistance with numerous paddling opportunities that got experienced and beginning paddlers out on the river. The Friends of the MNRR Annual Meeting and Conference brought us many new members and many of them spent time in kayaks.

The New Year offers you the chance to get involved with youth education opportunities through many festivals and other events. The Friends of the MNRR will again assist with many paddling events in 2018 to get more people on the river.

If you helped with events in 2017 thank you. We strongly encourage all of our members to get involved with the organization. Step up, consider becoming a board member, an officer or helping with events and activities. The strength of any organization depends on the commitment of its members. Let's make 2018 another great year for the Friends of the MNRR and more importantly for the Missouri National Recreational River!

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Pass It Forward. Pass It On.





## Superintendent's Corner

Rick Clark, Missouri National Recreational River



As 2017 comes to a close and we unfurl 2018 banners, there is much to be thankful for. In July the Friends of the MNRR became two years-old. Comparable to the growing pains of a toddler the friends group is gaining its legs of mobility and seeking pathways to follow in support of the joint Park and friends group mission of river stewardship along the 98-mile river reach that comprises the Missouri National Recreational River. 2018 will mark unique opportunities for collaboration and partnership between the National Park Service and the Friends of the MNRR. Two pinnacle anniversary events will occur in 2018 that combined provide a unique platform for the agency and friends group to be harbingers for enhancing public recognition of park identity and purpose, while also seeking creative means to generate increased public involvement and support for a wide variety of park programs and projects. October 2, 2018 will mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act that eventually gave rise to the enabling legislation for the Missouri National Recreational River, which turns 40 November 10.

Imbedded within this anniversary year will be high profile planning and public involvement associated with the MNRR's development of the Goat Island Management Plan. Similarly, the park is expected to embark on a branding initiative in cooperation with the states of Nebraska and South Dakota to improve and standardize alert and directional signage leading to the various boat landings, access sites, and other points of interest up and down the river from Pickstown, SD to Ponca, NE. So, collectively the friends group and the park have a unique opportunity in 2018 to use the anniversary platform as a catalyst or call to action to promote river stewardship by leveraging one another's strengths. Perhaps, and with my high hope, 2018 will see our partnership grow to new levels by our seeking new territories and taking initiatives such as the friends group embracing philanthropy as a means to advance the joint cause embodied in the MNRR's six founding outstandingly remarkable values of fish and wildlife, geological, ecological, cultural, scenic, and recreational.

Your support is making the future of the river better; know that as a Friends member, you're indeed making a difference. You're enhancing stewardship and wellbeing of the river.

Thank you and please join us to make our rich 2018 all it can be as we celebrate these noteworthy anniversaries and milestones.



Bow Creek, a major Missouri River tributary and the namesake of MNRR's Bow Creek Recreation Area weaves its ways through the property and joins the Missouri River. The creek has shifted several times in the past several decades, but has remained a fixture on the local landscape and is a highlight at Bow Creek Recreation Area. Go explore this area and check out the hiking trail and new primitive campsites located upriver from the Myron Grove boat ramp. Visit online [nps.gov/mnrr](http://nps.gov/mnrr) for more information.





# Getting Closer to a “Friend” - How Paddling the MNRR Can Change Everything

By Jarett C. Bies, Friends Member

There's no *wrong* way to enjoy the amazing vistas of the Missouri National Recreational River. But there is a best way.

Nothing puts a person closer to the innate power and unique beauty of this natural treasure like a trip on its surface in a paddled craft. Fishing enthusiasts cover more miles, natch, and they do it sans effort and sweat. Hikers and riders enjoy holding that water over one shoulder or the other during their outings along its banks.

But paddlers get up close and personal with the Mighty Mo. It's not a white-water thrill-ride - the entire park is Class Zero on the white-water scale - but there are thrills. There's also a sense of accomplishment when you cover miles and do so without the aid of anything more than a long stick with spoons on its ends.



For me, the intimate nature of a paddling trip is enlightening and uplifting. First off, the humbling nature of the river's power is something everyone should enjoy safely. I host an event that pits paddlers against five miles against the current and if you have never paddled upstream - give it a try. It'll make you stronger and certainly give you a safe-but-thorough education on how much force is hauling you along the surface.

The myriad deadheads, snags and obstacles on the river also make every paddling trip unique and remind one of the true wildernesses that lie between the sandy shores of this noteworthy National Park. On countless trips I

have narrowly avoided bonking a paddle blade against a log I didn't notice until just brushing by it. While bonking would not put me in the water *per se*, it could happen, and those little near-misses often make me think "Hmmm, the Missouri just spared me a swim!"



That part of flat-water paddling is why the MNRR is so ideal for kayaking. You can spend a couple hours or a couple of weeks exploring the nooks and crannies of this dominant waterway, and you'll more often than not have some out-of-sight encounters with wildlife. Young eagles and their parents dot the high cottonwoods and their huge nests are visible from miles away. Owls, osprey and other birds - thousands of them - are your constant companion.

Since you're mostly silent in motion, the chances you'll drop in on deer on the bank are high. You'll also be likely to see them swim, now and again, and if you're really lucky you may see a paddlefish give its best great white shark impression and breach up and out of the water, only to disappear just fractions of a second later.



The sights are many and the tangible sensation of being a quarter-mile out on water with just your paddling pals is like no other. I like to reach down with both hands and touch the bottom of my boat, realizing this slender cone of fiberglass is all that's holding me out of the drink. There's a proximity knowledge you gain when you're just four or five inches off the water, under your own power. It's humbling and empowering all in one hard-to-explain sensation.

Granted, there's no shortage of hardships on the river. Safe paddling is crucial, but wind, waves and more wind can make even a short hop paddle become a slog of suffering, where you're fighting the breeze to keep that paddle in your hand and sure as heck hoping the take-out point is around the next bend. The heat of summer can be cloying and yes, you're outside, so there will be bugs.



But all those salty sidetracking items cannot take away from the grand beauty that is a paddling jaunt on these waters. That's probably why I host a number of events and reach out to folks new to the sport so that they can give it a try. Having first-hand contact with the MNRR - especially on the water - it can change a person. I have seen it happen - someone comes to a competitive event, they start slowly and the next thing you know they are doing them every weekend all over the land.

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## Getting Closer to a “Friend”

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It's not a necessary evolution, but one that's fun to be a part of, and with a resource like this amazing river so nearby, I hope it's one with which more folks will experiment. Paddling the Missouri National Recreational River packs beauty, thrills, wildlife and excitement all into a package that with a little practice and some friends can become a lifelong passion.

I hope my gadfly-like ramblings about this amazing water will make you get closer to the river that cuts South Dakota in half. The river can be a potent friend that will always be glad to see you arrive with paddles in hand.

Maybe it's time for you to get a little closer to it.



## Respect For The River

*By Dennis Menke, Friends Member*

My father had a folksy saying about the river, “Respect it son; it doesn’t care about you.” He knew the beauty and power of the river and the value it innately has for the human soul. When I take my grandchildren to the river to make a big splash and have “river fun,” I give them the same advice. They are our families fifth generation to get pleasure from the river.

Yes, we should all have respect for the river. It’s true that the river cannot care about you; but we must care about the river. We are knowledgeable and understand what the Wild and Scenic River Act is truly about; respecting the environment that surrounds the river, preserving and protecting what nature has bountifully provided us and nurturing the river ecosystems for all the generations that come after us.

The Friends of the MNRR are celebrating two big birthdays this year in the National Park system; The Wild and Scenic River Act turns 50 and our special place, the MNRR is 40 years old this season. You and I enjoy the Missouri River that is the MNRR; I know that thousands of people every year are being introduced to the MNRR because of the efforts of the park staff and the Friends. Your continuing support of the MNRR and the Friends of the MNRR will make this our most fun year on the Missouri River ever. I am excited about the prospects for 2018 and these two birthdays’ celebrations; it’s going to be a special year for the Friends of the MNRR.

*I have not been on any river that has more of a personality than does the Missouri River. It's a river that immediately presents to the traveler, 'I am a grandfather spirit. I have a source; I have a life. - William Least Heatmoon*



# ROSCOE Feels Right at Home in School

By Teresa Mentzer, MNRR Education Technician

Roscoe has a fan club! This lovable MNRR mascot spent the summer traveling with the rangers in the Mobile Ranger Station, where he was often greeted with a familiar, sometimes shrill, ROSCOE! Visitors of all ages stopped to cuddle him or give him a pat of approval on the head. Who can resist a cute, whiskery mug like that, right?



4th graders with Roscoe and Ranger Teresa

His biggest fans might be the 4th grade students at schools up and down the Missouri River corridor who see him everyday in their classrooms, on a shelf in the school library or perched on a secretary's desk in the office. In Ponca he enjoys a comfy spot in the reading corner on the couch where students often snuggle with him as they read.

Each school currently on the ROSCOE program schedule for spring and fall has received a Roscoe of their very own. Thanks to the MNRR and the Friends of the MNRR who purchased these stuffed animals to give to the participating schools. They serve as a reminder of the valuable river resource nearby and the importance of preserving and protecting it in the future.

So far Roscoe has found a home in the classrooms of these Nebraska and South Dakota communities: Ponca, Hartington, Crofton, Niobrara, Santee, Butte, Wagner, Marty, Springfield, Yankton and Vermillion. Next spring he will be in Verdigre.

Roscoe and I visited 50 classrooms and presented more than 1,000 programs to outgoing 4th graders last spring and incoming 4th graders this fall. The programs focus on the fact that these students have a "national park right in their backyard!" While most of them are familiar with the Missouri River, the news that they can claim the Missouri National Recreational River as their own is exciting!

The fall program serves as an introduction to the park. Students love maps and they pour over the MNRR brochure looking for familiar places along with their home town. It is this sense of place that connects them to the park and helps them realize how close they live to it. "Roscoe's River Report" is an interactive activity for the students which gives them a general overview of the MNRR. They learn that the Missouri River is the longest river in North America, that the park protects the piping plover, least tern and pallid sturgeon and that the values of the river include important historical and cultural ties. Roscoe also tries to emphasize the role they play as future stewards of the park and how to practice good stewardship.



What do you call a group of otters? Answer: romp

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## ROSCOE (continued)



The spring program has had varying themes. In 2015 and 2016 the NPS Centennial Celebration and the Every Kid in the Park (EKIP) Initiative were the focus. Last spring the topic was habitat and some of the flora and fauna the river supports. 2018 marks the 50th Anniversary of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and the 40th Birthday of the MNRR! Roscoe will be touting those milestones next spring when he ventures back into the classrooms.

Getting the word out about EKIP and how 4th graders can get their free passes to national parks is still at the forefront as well. It was fun this fall to share the story of Nicholas, one of our Junior Rangers, who used the pass to go to Yellowstone with his parents. His testimonial that, "Yellowstone was more amazing than Disney World!" helps to encourage these young people to explore our national treasures.

ROSCOE, River Odyssey for School and Community Outreach and Education was developed to create awareness about the Missouri National Recreational River in schools and communities along and near the Missouri River from Pickstown to Ponca. Roscoe made his first visits in the fall of 2015 and has added more communities, schools and their students to his fan club over the past two and a half years. While he covers a lot of ground, Roscoe is always looking for more opportunities to visit classrooms and to tell about his home, the Missouri River.

To schedule a ROSCOE presentation in your school, contact Daniel Peterson, Chief of Interpretation, 605-665-0209 Ext 23 or by email at [Daniel\\_Peterson@nps.gov](mailto:Daniel_Peterson@nps.gov).

## Inaugural Run of Junior Ranger Academy a Success!

By Dillon Dwyer, Reporter. Reprint from Press & Dakotan, August 25, 2017.

With its focus on promoting the Missouri River as a national park and recreational resource, the Interpretation, Education and Outreach division completed its inaugural Roscoe Junior Ranger Academy during the 2017 summer season. The free, 11-student program ran from June through August, meeting twice a month, for children ages 10-15. The program itself consisted of six different activities, ranging from hiking trails and kayaking to learning about aquatic species of the Missouri River. Each activity contained educational and conservation components as well as focus on enjoying the recreation opportunities offered by the natural resource of the Missouri River. In order to receive a junior ranger badge and certificate, participants needed to attend five of the six activities offered through the program.



"The overall goal of the program is to establish a group of young volunteers and stewards for the park, and to foster their appreciation for the national park in their backyard," said Teresa Mentzer, MNRR Education Technician. "We also want to foster a sense of awareness, connection and ownership of the park in our young rangers." Through those activities, the MNRR hoped to inspire the potential for Junior Park Rangers to one day possibly become full-fledged rangers at a national park. "This year's academy was a huge success and will expand its reach into Vermillion, SD in 2018," said Daniel Peterson, Chief of Interpretation, Education and Outreach.

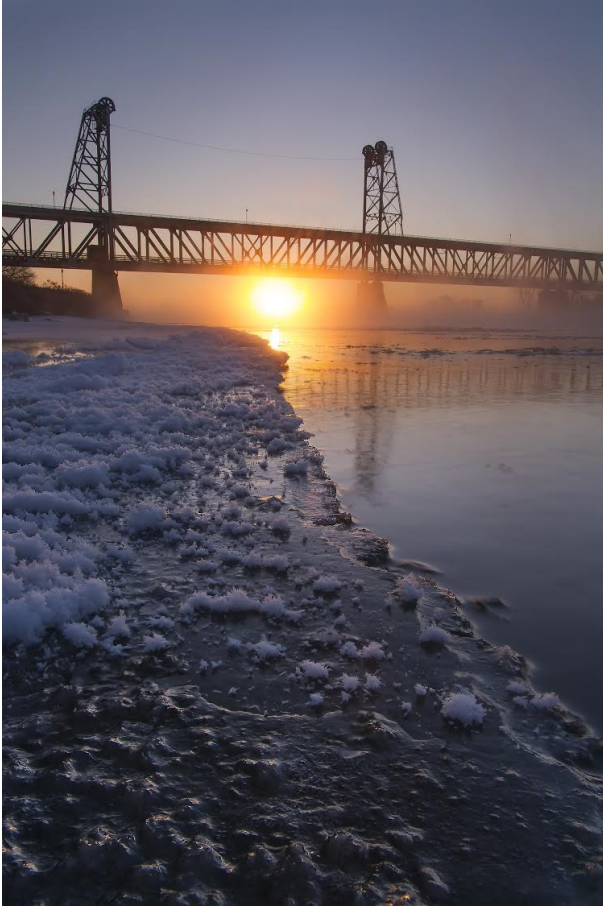
Funding for the program was provided by the Friends of the MNRR. The friends group not only funded the activities of the program, but it also provided items like T-shirts, journals, water bottles, lanyards and knapsacks for the students free of charge. "We rely on our partners and different agencies to help with this program," Mentzer said. "Their contributions and support are essential. We want the kids to understand how closely our park works together with other agencies to protect the river."





# Heaven For a Landscape Photographer

By Sam Stukel, Photographer



The Missouri National Recreational River is a window into the past, shining a light on the key geographical feature of our region. It has sustained us with food and water, protected us from winter's chill and summer's heat, given us a route from here to there and served as a playground for many generations. We have been shaped by this unique and temperamental river in more ways than most understand and it is outstanding that protections are in place to preserve priceless pieces of it.

Though each season has its charms, winter stands out to me as a photographer and fan of wild places. There's a stillness that allows the mind to wander unlike during the busier seasons. The current and the cold fight over turf, forming constantly-changing shelves of ice along the shorelines. A steady stream of smooth-edged ice masses bob and drift as they travel downstream, occasionally running into one another like cubes in a cocktail glass. The hardest of northern waterfowl whistle by overhead and the screech of bald eagles carry for miles in the crisp air.

Dawn on the coldest of mornings brings out my favorite of the River's winter features. Thick fog hovers above the river like a blanket trying to protect it from the frigid air above. The interplay of light and swirling vapor seems to be different every morning and amazing displays of color are likely for a few magical moments. It is heaven for a landscape photographer that does not mind numb fingers or a little ice on the lens.

*Photos and text by Sam Stukel*



## Committee Report: Missouri River Events

*By Mary Robb, Friends Member*

A Friends committee that's always working behind the scenes, is planning their 2018 calendar. The 8-person committee gathers once a month to plan and set dates for the Missouri River Watershed School Festival, the Missouri River Clean Up, and Lake Yankton Outdoor Fest. Out of all of the events, the watershed school festival is most popular.

**Missouri River Watershed School Festival** involves 7<sup>th</sup> through 11<sup>th</sup> grade students from the Yankton area and surrounding communities in a fast-paced outdoor educational opportunity. The students attend six hands on presentations that are highly focused on Missouri River and other critical natural resource related issues. Since 2009, 3,170 students have participated in the May event.

### Missouri River Clean Up

Every spring volunteers from around the area pitch in to help clean the river of trash and litter in Yankton. Volunteers board boats or walk the river's edge picking up trash including tires, aluminum cans, and glass bottles that have accumulated over the year. Since 2004, 108.52 tons of trash has been removed within the five-mile stretch. Just think what we could do for the entire 59- and 39-mile stretches of the park.

Want to help in 2018? Saturday, May 5, 2018 will be the next river clean up. Please contact Ranger Dugan Smith by calling 605-665-0209 Ext 28 or email [dugan\\_smith@nps.gov](mailto:dugan_smith@nps.gov) to volunteer.

**Lake Yankton Outdoor Festival** was started in 2014 for the public to attend some of the events the students participate in at the Missouri River Watershed Festival. This event gives an opportunity to reach more of the public and engage them in activities that can be done utilizing our wonderful natural resource, from fishing to camping, to issues facing the Missouri River, and safe boating practices. The committee is considering bringing back for the 2018 year cardboard boat races. Teams build boats out of cardboard and race.



Students learn and touch fish at the Missouri Fish station with help from staff at Galvins Point National Fish Hatchery.



Volunteers arriving back to the Yankton's Riverside boat ramp with a load of river trash.

## Mark Your Calendar

- **May 3:** Missouri River Watershed Education Fair at Yankton's Riverside Park.
- **May 5:** 15th Annual Missouri River Clean Up begins at 8:00 a.m. at the Boat Ramp in Riverside Park.
- **May 5:** Dam 'N' Back Trek kayaking event
- **May 26-27:** South Dakota Kayak Challenge
- **June 9:** Lake Yankton Outdoor Festival and Lewis and Clark Homestead Day (Pierson Ranch Recreation Area, SD)
- **July 14:** Fort to Field 50 Paddle Battle event



# BULLETIN BOARD



## FOMNRR SHIRTS AND CAPS ON SALE

Shirts and hats are tan in color. Shirt sizes come in small, medium, large, and extra-large. Hats are one size fits all. Shirts are \$25 and caps are \$15. Shipping is available for \$5 per item by calling 605-665-0209 Ext 23, or pick up your items at the Park Headquarters Monday–Friday.

Seeking Friends to enrich life, boost happiness, and improve self-worth? Please write to [info@fomnrr.org](mailto:info@fomnrr.org)

## HELP WANTED!

Looking for graphic artist. Make postcards, book-marks, banners, etc. Call Dan at 605-665-0209

Finished Reading Newsletter? Pass it on!



Support the Friends by shopping at AmazonSmile.

## Tweet It. Like It. Post It ... Share It!



Crowned the king of communication, social media is an effective communication tool, especially here where our population centers are far-flung. We know it's the preferred vehicle for our Friends group to share information on events and news based on our polling responses. Facebook is the most widely used, so we are using it more and hope you'll chip in as we begin a celebratory year.

In 2017 we learned how Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram can help us spread the word, and while we'll still seek out traditional advertising mediums, all of us can help on the social-media side. We can all chip in with our stories, photos or thoughts, we can engage our audience, grow our membership and keep relevant our central idea: The Missouri National Recreational River is here for all of us, an organic treasure.

Our social media campaign also is organic, and in anticipation of the 2018 celebrations, the MNRR social media team has developed "snack-pack" mini-themed postings that will feature fun messaging around unique moments in 2018. This idea includes postings and activities that relate to the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of the Wild & Scenic Rivers, and National Trails systems and the National Park Foundation. These posts also includes celebrating about the 40<sup>th</sup> birthday of both the MNRR and the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail.

Doesn't that sound Tweet? We hope you'll use the Twitter handles including @MissouriRecNPS as well as the hashtags found below. Like our pages on Facebook, just search for Missouri National Recreational River and Friends of the Missouri National Recreational River, and make sure to follow us on Instagram: @MissouriRiverNPS.

**#WeAreParks**

**#FindYourPark**

**#FindYourWay**

**#ParkPartners**

**#FindYourMNRR**



**Friends of the MNRR**  
P.O. Box 7029  
Yankton, SD 57078



Mail to:

**FIND YOUR  
PARK**

**FRIENDS OF THE  
Missouri National Recreational River**

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[www.fomnrr.org](http://www.fomnrr.org)  
Click on the "Join Now" button

**Mail this form and a check made payable to  
Friends of the MNRR to:**

Friends of the MNRR  
P.O. Box 7029  
Yankton, SD 57078

Membership includes a subscription to the newsletter,  
invitations to Friends programs and field trips.  
Memberships and donations are tax-deductible.

**Join the Friends of the MNRR**

Member Names: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Annual Membership Levels**

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☐ \$10 Student  
☐ \$5 Youth

☐ This is a gift membership  
Gift donor's name, phone and email address:  
\_\_\_\_\_

